# medical missionary

NO. 1
1968

By means of missionary activity, the plan of God is fulfilled --- that plan to which Christ conformed with loving obedience for the glory of the Father who sent Him, that the whole human race might form one People of God, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit which, being the expression of brotherly harmony corresponds with the inmost wishes of all men. And so at last, there will be realized the plan of our Creator, who formed man to his own image and likeness, when all who share one human nature, regenerated in Christ and through the Holy Spirit beholding the glory of God, will be able to say with one accord: "Our Father."

decree on the missionary activity of the Church, 7

# medical missionary

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## PEOPLE


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# CELEBRATION OF EXISTENCE

We have to thank you, Almighty God,
that You are a God of people . . .

that You have not been ashamed
to be called our God . . .

that You know us by our name,
that You keep the world
in Your hands . . .

for You have made us
and called us in this life
to be united to You
to be your people on this earth . . .

Blessed are You for the light of our eyes
and for the air we breathe.
We thank You
for the whole of creation,
for all the works of Your hands,
for all You have done in our midst . . .

We pray that in the midst of this world
and before the eyes of all people
with whom we are united,
we may live Your gospel
and be the sign of Your peace . . .

that we may support and serve each other in love,
that our hearts may be opened
to the poor, the sick, and the dying,
and to all who are in need.
(A Dutch Canon)

# THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

*By Sister Miriam Therese Winter*

Headlines scream of war and waste. In far away lands, remote and unreal, *mankind* is dying. Starvation, famine, floods, quakes, oppression, disease — whole civilizations are caught up in a peculiar kind of hell. So much need. It plagues the sensitive, those who have not nearly as many hardships as others have; it goads some beyond the realm of awareness into the dynamic sphere of action. Yet these countless claims on a man's conscience are beginning to irritate. Many are tired of getting involved. They are fed up. Why bother? You can't lick the whole world. There are problems here at home, tangible ones, that are ripe with challenge. This man right here, for instance. I know him. I can feel his predicament. He needs me. But those people way out of there. Who are *they*?

Who *are* they? They are persons, just like you, needing persons, just like you. All men are basically the same. Americans, Indians, Africans, Chinese — it makes no difference really. That is a good thing to know, because deep down, we are afraid of strangers. We are afraid of making a new acquaintance, of meeting the boss's wife, of stepping into a new culture where our frame of reference is bound to undergo a radical upheaval. The new, different, unfamiliar scares us, and so we close up. Sometimes we run away. We are accused of being indifferent, unconcerned, but it goes much deeper than

that. Time and again it is this basic instinct for self-protection that forces a man to content himself with a comfortable circle of close friends among whom he grows, matures, becomes senile and dies. For him, the headlines remain just that—headlines—disturbing but distant. But on some, the fine print of mankind's plea for mercy leaves its indelible mark. Sensitive to people just because they are people, they are ripped wide open and driven to investigate the dictum, just who *is* my neighbor?

Peoples of other countries seem so very different on the surface. Each civilization, each nation, every tiny pocket of people lives in a different way. They do things differently, think differently, have a different system of values. We call them societies, these groups of people who have learned to work together. They do what they do, they act as they do, because of their culture. But what is culture? It is not the deed or the action. It is a distinctive way of life, a way of thinking, feeling, believing that necessarily gives rise to patterns for doing certain things in certain ways. It is a facet of human life, that part of learned behavior shared with others that regulates our lives at every turn. As a result, men are constantly pressured, consciously or unconsciously, to follow certain modes of behavior that other men have created for them. This may lead to individual hostility or frustration, but essentially culture "is what binds men together." (Ruth Benedict)

A culture binds individuals together, it is true, but at the same time it keeps groups of individuals apart. On the one hand it unites, on the other hand it divides mankind into a multitude of individual, isolated units, giving rise to international misunderstanding on many fronts. You might say that mankind is not really made up of man and man and man; it is composed of culture and culture.

Each culture is unique. It takes a certain heroism to be unique within a community of any kind, whether of individuals or nations. It takes courage, daring, to respect the unique and not try to change it. Absolute conformity is the pathetic attempt of the insecure to deny uniqueness, because uniqueness is terrifying in its alienation. Yet how can there ever be genuine concern for one another amid so much diversity?

The fact of culture does compound the problem, there is no doubt. Indeed it challenges some of the finer instincts in a man who would bridge the cultural gap, who would bother about his neighbor. It commands him to dig beneath the surface situation of things and go straight to the core where he will see other people as they really are. A culture is after all only a product of man himself, a system devised from man's own experiences. More basic to the concept of culture is our very manhood, and it is this that we hold as common denominator with all people the world over. The Indian experiences hunger and pain and loneliness — so do I. The Polynesian sometimes gets frustrated — so do I. The Venezuelan hates injustice—so do I. The Vietnamese civilian, the Pakistani merchant, the Indonesian farmer have feelings and emotions, think, speak, hate, love just like any person anywhere. The way each mouths his words and manipulates his environment is each culture's claim to splendor, the miracle of diversity that is hailed with every fall of snow but so often overlooked among the most magnificent acts of creation.

And so I can love a stranger as a neighbor, comprehend his misery, feel compassion and concern for him in his struggle to survive, because basically, he is just like me. I don't have to change him to understand him. But I do have to reach him, and the prerequisites for this are often heroic.

To communicate with someone you really do not know or understand, to get through to him, it is essential to climb out of ourselves and into the other fellow's skin, to see another side, a different perspective, to see it *his* way. This is perhaps the hardest thing any one man may ever be asked to do, to deny himself expression of his innate cultural response. Who chooses to do this? Many do. The humanist. The dedicated Christian. The religious. The missionary. Ordinarily it is the impetus of a dynamic gospel awareness that motivates the latter. They desire to offer a genuine Christian service, to place themselves at the disposal of the people of God. They do not always succeed.

Public servants that are religiously motivated are often regarded with suspicion. Men have come to distrust religion. It seems so removed from reality. It implies a constant "tending toward" something, seldom an "involved in-ness." It projects a vertical perspective on reality, relating everything to a Being "up there." Religious are accused of being inhuman, missionaries of being impersonal. The label is entirely unjustified. Too often they have been just that, detached, aloof, apparent do-

gooders intent on statistics, more convinced of saving souls than bodies. Catholicism structured such attitudes and their inevitable manifestations. Preoccupation with "doing this thing for God" obliterated the often genuine, warm love for the person that prompted the deed. The concept of pilgrim people on the march to the heavenly kingdom often led the "People of God" tramping right past God's people. Fear of "the world," mistrust of its enticements, led many to reject the world and its societies with their modes of behavior, eventually leading to a non-understanding of people and their wonderfully human humanity.

But a truly religious climate poses no real dichotomy. Twentieth-century atheism has done much to counteract the thrust of impersonalism, not in its denial of God, but in its affirmation of man. Atheism holds that man is wonderfully fashioned. And Christian humanism insists it is man's very humanity that is a triumph of grace. Man has "got to be good." The Incarnation refutes every form of dehumanized spirituality, incorporates God into man's existential situation, celebrates God as the very "ground of being," man as a being loved. God is not removed,

remote from people. Why then should His followers choose to be? Jesus was a *man,* and His manhood established horizontal lines from man to man to man to God. "God so loved the *world*" — and we who would imitate Him too love the world —"that He sent His only Son to become a man" . . . and, as Bonhoeffer says, He was a "man for others." Like Jesus, we love people, not for any ulterior motive, not as a means to an end, not because we see God in them, not to save their souls, to convert, to influence, to dominate, to *use,* but we love them for themselves.

People need to be loved. They need to be loved in order to be. A man is never fully himself until he is loved by someone. "God loved the world unto salvation." We say that salvation means being saved from something. It really means being brought *to* something, being brought to the fullness of life. When we love life into others, we offer them salvation.

To love like this is never easy. "Involvement with people is a very delicate thing," says Bernard Cooke, S.J. "It requires real maturity to become involved and not get all messed up." When we love someone, we usually have ambitions for him. We want him to succeed, to grow, to make the right choices. When he fails we desert him, disappointed that he has not already achieved what we desire. It is a valiant love that can love a man to maturity through all of his ups and downs.

Growing, developing nations need just such a love as this. The people of these nations need to be loved to the fullness of life. They need in their quest for freedom the strong, solid climate of support. They need to be accepted, to belong, to be equal members of humanity. Some must fight for this freedom. Some must die for it. So many people are not fully free to choose, because the chains of poverty, sickness, malnutrition, illiteracy still limit them.

The needs of neighboring nations must penetrate the all too prevalent climate of indifference. We who would be *Christian* have the staggering responsibility of delivering our brothers from their social limitations. We *must* feed the hungry. We *must* clothe the naked. We *must* run to the sick. We who read between the headlines must love today as Christ loves, warmly, humanly, concretely. We are all members of one family, sons of one Father. We are all one people of God. We do not love people in a mass. We love them as individuals. This is the truly Christian response.

To the Christian, people simply means one person, multiplied.

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**We need your help to continue our "people to people" health service in Africa, Asia and South America.**

I wish to help you $_____respond to the health needs of people in developing countries.

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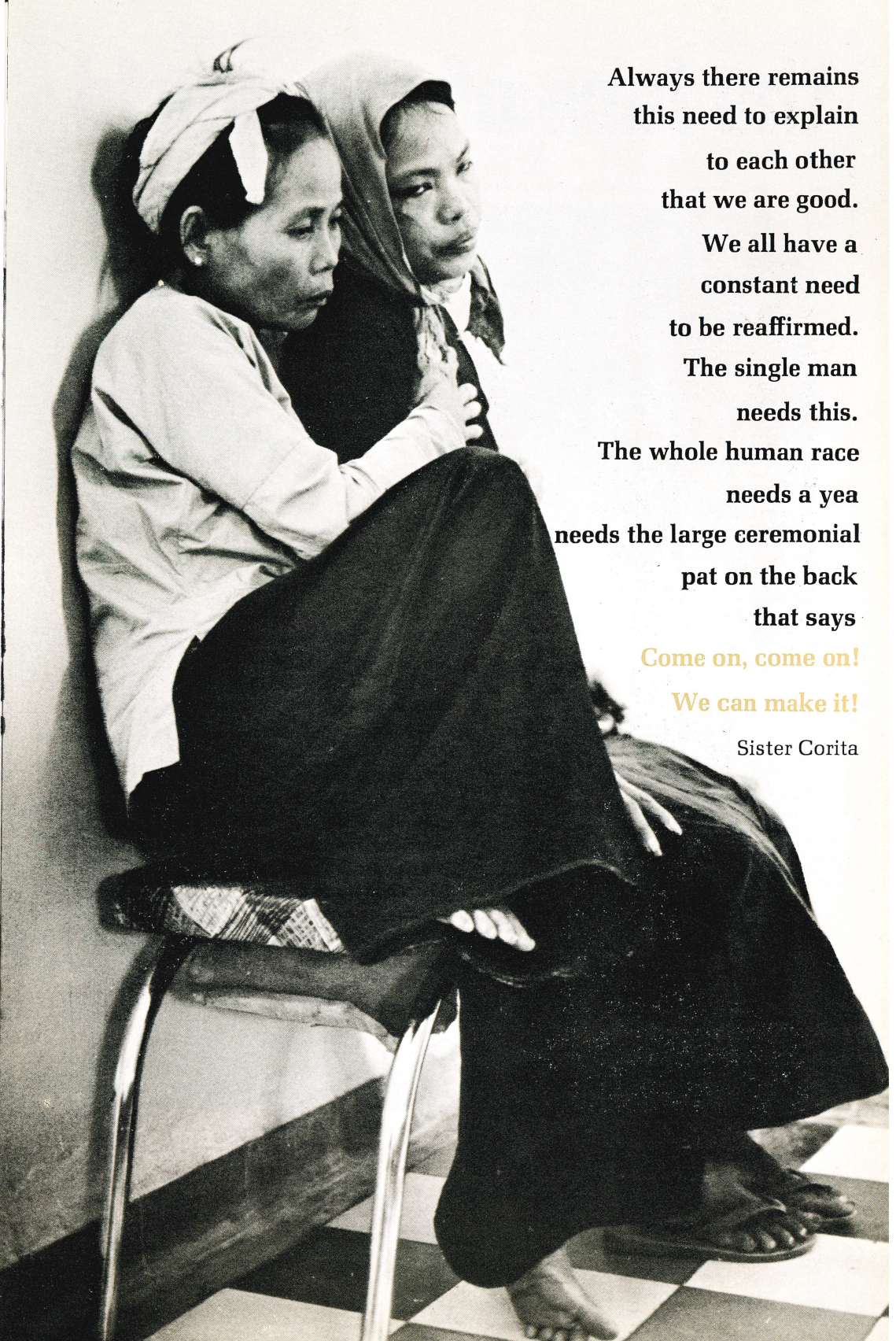


**Always there remains**
**this need to explain**
**to each other**
**that we are good.**
**We all have a**
**constant need**
**to be reaffirmed.**
**The single man**
**needs this.**
**The whole human race**
**needs a yea**
**needs the large ceremonial**
**pat on the back**
**that says**
**Come on, come on!**
**We can make it!**

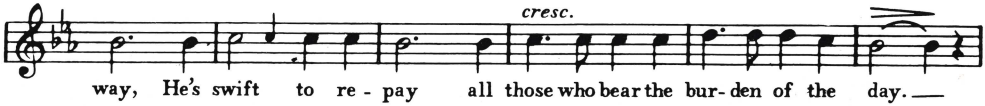
Sister Corita

# the face of the world

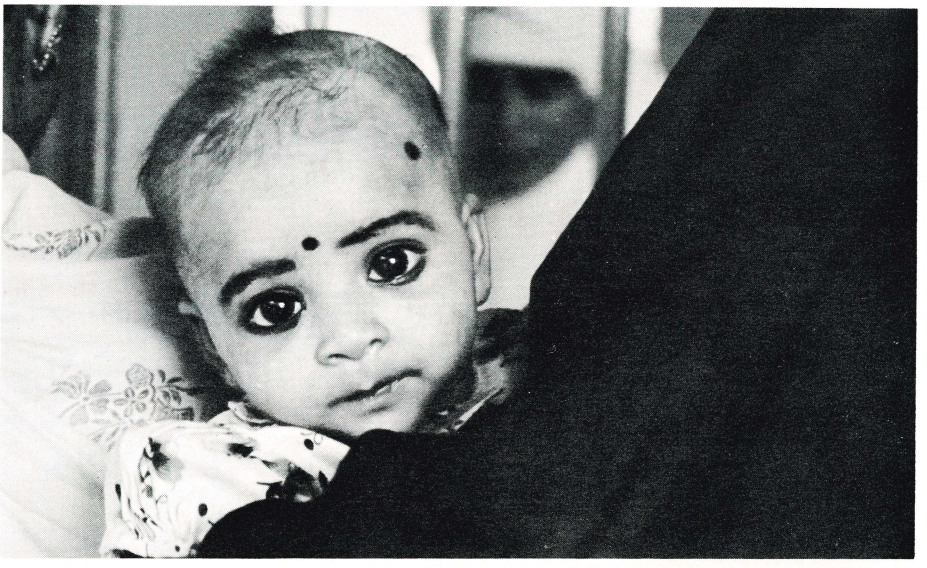
**Read now the times, today, the tensions and turmoil, truths and untruths, the toil, tears and temptations, read it written on the face of the world.**

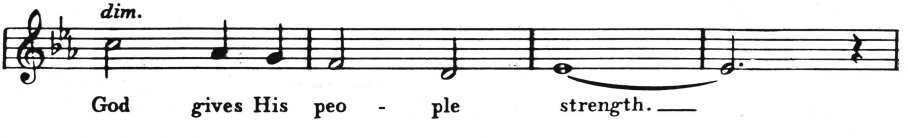
**Trace the fine line of hope,**
**upswing, tomorrow, half-hidden here today.**

# In the face of poverty

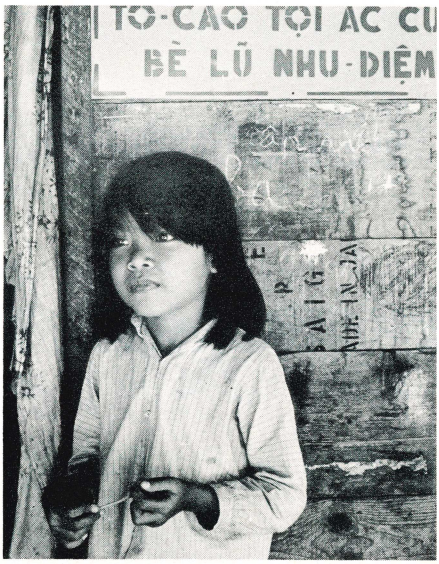


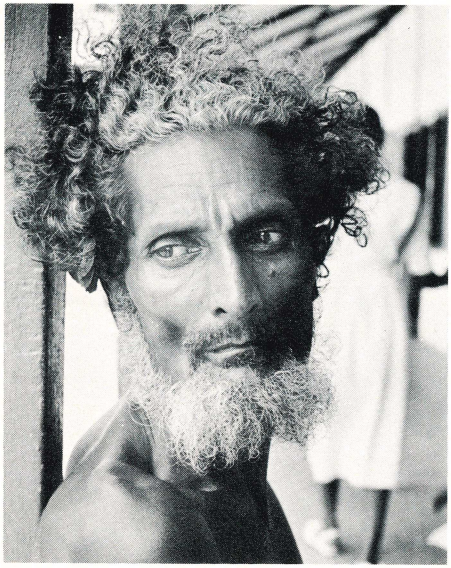
# . . . promise





# In the face of loneliness and alienation

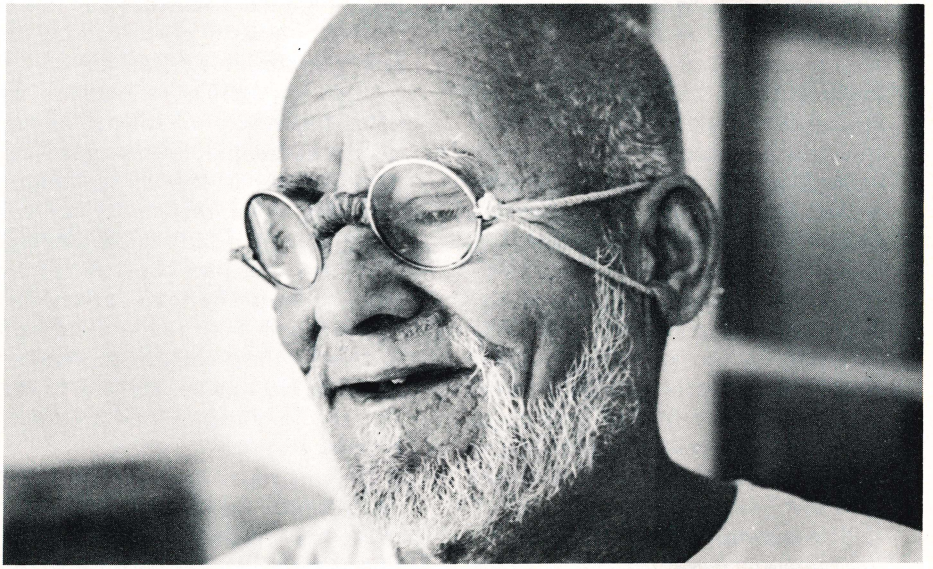


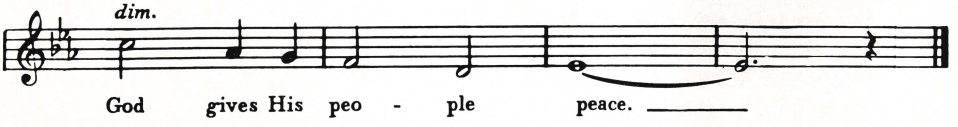



# . . . comfort

# In the face of fear, anguish, disappointment

# . . . peace





# IN THE PRESENCE OF NEED

*By Sister Kristine Malins*

The Gospel offers us one very striking feature about Jesus Christ—He was a man for people. They seemed to crowd around Him wherever He went, eager to hear His words and feel His healing touch their pain. His power to act never failed to amaze and challenge them. Nothing seemed beyond Him. He calmed the winds and multiplied loaves of bread. He ate with publicans and sinners and called them His friends. He met the hostility of certain rulers with a quiet assurance born of interior vision and integrity.

"How did He come by His teaching and these miracles?" everyone marveled. How, in the midst of the mass of humanity that continually surrounded Him, could Jesus listen and respond to the need of each unique being who approached Him?

Once in Capharnaum a great crowd was following Him. Among them was a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years. She had endured a great deal at the hands of the doctors, spending her money in the process, but was not cured. In fact, her condition had taken a turn for the worse. Somewhere, this woman had heard about Jesus and the power that emanated from Him. Maybe it was the leper He had made clean; or the paralytic He had sent home carrying his own stretcher in his hands. Stories had even filtered across the Galilean Sea that a lunatic in Gerasa had been freed from a legion of evil spirits at Jesus' word.

"If I can only touch His clothes," the woman with the hemorrhage kept saying, "I shall be all right." Under the cover of the crowd, she came up to Jesus and touched His cloak. Immediately she was cured!

Jesus Himself sensed the presence of need near to Him and a faith that *demanded* and *received* a response from Him. He turned around in the middle of the crowd and inquired:

"Who touched My clothes?"

The disciples looked askance. "Lord you can see this crowd jostling You. How can You ask 'Who touched Me?' "

Jesus nonetheless searched the sea of faces around Him to find who had done so. The woman saw His questioning gaze and trembled with fear. Perhaps she had gone too far with this gentle man who had done such great things to others. It is true she had disobeyed the Mosaic Law by having contact with Him in her diseased condition. Such was forbidden. And yet, there she stood—*whole*. Could she really fear anything? She flung herself at His feet and told Him the whole story.

"Daughter (He called her daughter), it is your faith that has healed you. Go home in peace and be free from your trouble." (Mark 5)

It is impossible to explain this deep sensitivity of Christ toward people as unique and indispensable persons. Nor is it easy to comprehend His total receptivity to their smallest sign of faith. Most astounding is the fact that His love for one did not limit His love for another, but rather occasioned and enriched it. He met the woman with a hemorrhage as He was on His way to cure the dying daughter of a Jewish official.

Anyone who has seen Jesus Christ and claims to be His disciple is charged by Christ's love to develop this same deep consciousness of people, to leave himself wide open to their being and expectations. The Christian's constant task in announcing the Good News is to tell every man "Your faith will heal you." Then the Christian must respond to this faith and work to free each man from his trouble.

# DYNAMITE

*By Sister Donna Dean*

*. . . under the guidance of the Holy Spirit*
*we wish to inquire*
*how we ought to renew ourselves*
*so that we may be found*
*increasingly faithful to the gospel*
*of Christ.*

*We shall take pains*
*so to present to the men of this age*
*God's truth*
*in its integrity and purity*
*that they may understand it*
*and gladly assent to it.*

*(Message to Humanity—Opening of Vatican II)*

There is dynamite in these words, the same dynamite used by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Leave your father's house and go into the land which I shall show you." "Be converted to me with all your heart."

Ours is a living God. To know him is to experience all the demands that a living relationship entails: discovery, growth, change, new discovery. The theology of salvation history makes this poignantly clear. Man is a being called. He is constantly going out from his father's land, from his set ways, from himself, from his own limitations and fears into the land which God, the Caller, will show him. Our relationship is so dynamic, so living, that it can only be written as movement, as direction, a becoming. To settle down is to turn a deaf ear to the God who works in the future.

Yet to be constantly in the state of flux is almost impossible for the heart of man. We long to settle down, to have securities that will never be challenged, let alone changed. We are a living duality — called to be ever growing out toward the God who speaks in movement and, on the other hand, hankering for the settled existence of those who have arrived.

It is tiring, loving this dynamic God, and history proves that over and over again we pitch our tents or dig in to enjoy the promise when we should instead be walking toward the promised land. Whether it is the "no questions left unanswered" approach of the Baltimore Catechism or not eating meat on Friday or demanding that Church law or Church liturgy remain in every detail unaltered—the theme is the same: it is too hard to "renew ourselves so that we may be found increasingly faithful to the gospel of Christ." It is too hard to "take pains so to present to the men *of this age* God's truth in its integrity and purity that they may understand it and *gladly* assent to it." It is too hard to love a living God.

Still we are called and we know it. From the inside out we must be converted, must change. And the process is never over. That is what really hurts. So we hang on to cultural expressions of religious values and protest, "Religion is dying!" when someone with more insight and a well-informed theology tries to make these same religious values relevant to men of our times by pruning off their dead cultural accretions. We must ever rethink the gospel challenge in the light of our present existential situation. What *today* will bring the good news into the lives of men that it can be operative, alive, a leaven that transforms the whole?

In this perspective we wish to discuss the Medical Mission Sisters' efforts toward renewal. Every effort that we make might not ultimately be the right one—but it is sincerely and prayerfully that we begin. We are a bit afraid. Many have already become disappointed in us, and we feel it deeply. Yet we are called and we

know it. From the inside out we must be converted, must change.

The most obvious changes are often the least important but the most talked about. Externals. What's in a name? What's in a dress? There are so many issues that strike deeper into the essence of renewal. The habit, a new name in religion—both are externals. Symptomatic and symbolic, but surely not of the essence. However, the very fact that they are of the category of externals makes them more "discussable"—they are safer and more obvious effects of the renewal to debate — everyone has an opinion.

To adopt the ordinary dress of a woman of 1968 and to return to one's baptismal name we must have a reason and not just an opinion. Our reasons are culled from serious study of the contemporary situation and mentality, the evolving theology of religious life, and the challenges of Vatican II. The study has covered a period of over three years and is even now a continuous seeking for true gospel attitudes.

In all these changes it is essential to keep this concept in mind. What is cultural must be *current* culture if it is not to appear out-moded. The Church can no longer present medieval trappings to the 20th-century need for relevance. The Church can no longer hold on to a theology of withdrawal, a "seek the things that are above" that spurns the things that are below, the tools, the earth the Lord gave us to till and form and press deep into with His presence. Religious life can no longer capitalize on being a sign of the next world and neglect an intense and even painful involvement in this world.

Up to the Middle Ages the Church was a formative force in secular society. Since the 16th-century the world has transformed itself without the Church. Whether it be the mathematically precise rejection of God, the Great Watchmaker, by the 18th-century rationalist or the 20th-century proletariat Church "dropouts" or the intelligensia's "God is dead" creed, the world continues to move outside Church influence. Not only is it not interested in our signs—it is not interested in our values. We have our share of the burden of blame for this. Religion has too long been a thing of the next world. When the Church has at last awakened with a start to this unintentional dichotomy created between the city of God and the city of man and seeks to hasten with full heart into the inner, the secular city, she must not do so wearing the symbols of "the Church set apart."

"This is a hard saying—who can accept it?" (John 6) It humbles us; makes us approach the world on its terms. It kneels us down with gospel poverty; makes us keenly aware that we *do* carry our treasure in clay vessels, not alabaster jars.

To wear a set-apart sign, much as we would like to be a sign to the world, is to hanker after the past which fits into the present precisely as irrelevant.

*. . . Thus as Father Greely has so often pointed out, the past forms which have been preserved are not bad nor good, but simply from another culture. Modern technological man does not think in sign awarenesses. Rather he deals only with the pragmatic, with what works here and now. Thus for religious to discover how to show today the same great Christian values which they communicated in earlier times, is a truly new problem. A modern man who has not been introduced into the meaning of Catholic religious symbols (e.g., through association with religious) does not find religious habits symbolic, but simply anachronistic.*

*Vatican II has advanced and drastically restated the entire question of "signs"*

*by squarely basing itself on recent biblical research. In the New Testament it is always and only the human person, incorporated in Christ and loving and serving like him, who is the sign of Christ's presence, and the measure of judgment when the Lord returns. Christ's miracles in St. John are called signs, precisely because they are humanly visible acts of love and healing which tell men the Word of the Father. THUS THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS HABIT IS INEXTRICABLY INTERWOVEN WITH CHANGED ACTIONS OF LOVE OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN. SO THAT THEY CAN BE MORE MEANINGFUL SIGNS TO THE PRESENCE OF THE RISEN LORD NOW WORKING ON THIS EARTH . . . Clothing as such is in the modern world only a sign of organizational membership. It calls attention to the wearer's chosen group identification. Only DEEDS can be signs of Christian witness. This seems to be the crucial change inaugurated by Vatican II.**

*(Sr. Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn, CSC, unpublished General Chapter preparation material)

If religious want to be a sign today, it must be, as it was in the first days of Christianity, by a marked Christian love: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples"—not by a regulation tunic for each of the 72.

Many practical problems remain to be worked out—and they cannot be worked out in the abstract. We must try. Assuredly, the time and effort concentrated on clothing change is often distressing. There is a certain disproportion, indications of immaturity, uncertainties, mistakes. But in an era of renewal which hinges on personal responsibility for gospel living, we have to have enough Christian faith and trust in one another to give ourselves time to find a new footing and a personal balance. The present unrest is necessary and also creative — we are moving forward, moving deeper into the gospel. Gospel living has never been an easy task. Someone has aptly phrased

it: To live the Christian life is to live a life that is yet to be lived.

The call to relevance, to a realization that religious are not hierarchically raised above the rest of Christians, set apart, better, given a new name, is a call to once again leave our father's house and go into the land which the Lord will show us.

Perhaps we shall have to have the courage to wander for a long time. Longer than we would like. Perhaps we will take wrong directions. We only know that prayer, study, research and response to God calling us today, necessitates that we give wide options:

*"The General Chapter recommends that each Sister be permitted to wear lay dress or to retain the habit. Sisters who desire it, are permitted to replace the name given to them in the community with their Christian name."*

To be renewed in the spirit and with the heart of the gospel is to feel both the pinch and the power of the Good News.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Since January, 1968, the majority of Medical Mission Sisters in the United States have adopted ordinary dress. In situations requiring "religious" attire, they have the option of wearing a blue suit. Presently, the Medical Mission Sisters in various developing countries are seeking to dis - cover the proper dress for their own geographical and cultural area.

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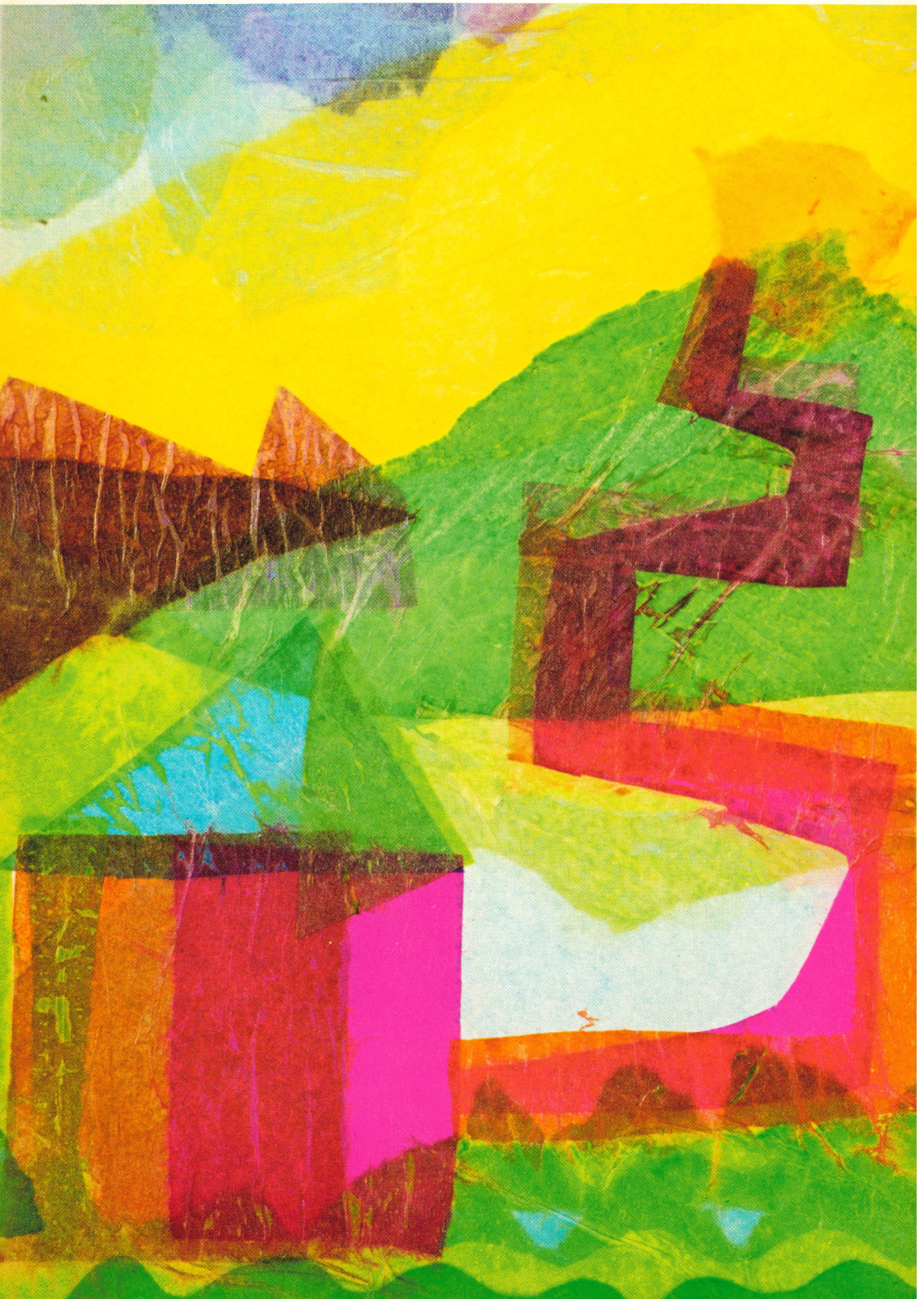
EDITOR: *Sister Miriam Therese Winter; Associate Editor: Sister Kristine Malins; Art Director: Michael C. Louridas; Photography: John L. Alexandrowicz; Art Credit, Inside covers: Sister Victoria (Eloyse) Connelly*

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION: *p. 2, Rawalpindi, West Pakistan; p. 3, India (WHO photo); p. 4, (top) Patna, India; (bottom) Rawalpindi, West Pakistan; p. 5, Mandar, India; p. 6, (top) Karachi, West Pakistan; (bottom) Mandar, India; p. 7, Karachi, West Pakistan; p. 8, Quinhon, South Vietnam; p. 9, Dacca, East Pakistan; p. 10, Berekum, Ghana; p. 11, Quinhon, South Vietnam; pp. 12-13, Amman, Jordan; pp. 14-15, Techiman, Ghana; p. 16, (left) Quinhon, South Vietnam; (right) Rawalpindi, West Pakistan; p. 17, (right) Quinhon, South Vietnam; p. 20, Quinhon, South Vietnam; p. 21, Nigeria; p. 22, (top) Thuruthipuram, India; (bottom) New Delhi, India; p. 23, (top) Dacca, East Pakistan; (bottom) Thuruthipuram, India; p. 24, (upper left) Mymensingh, East Pakistan; (upper right) Quinhon, South Vietnam; (lower left) Rawalpindi, W. Pakistan; (lower right) Quinhon, South Vietnam; p. 25, (top) Karachi, West Pakistan; (bottom) Thuruthipuram, India; p. 26, (top) Quinhon, South Vietnam; (bottom) Patna, India; p. 27 (upper left) Mymensingh, East Pakistan; (upper right) Mandar, India; (bottom) Rawalpindi, West Pakistan; p. 19, Quinhon, South Vietnam.*

COVER PHOTO: *Rural scene, Quinhon, South Vietnam.*

*Music and words, pp. 21-27, "God Gives His People Strength," Copyright: Medical Mission Sisters, 1966.*

Yahweh said to Abram: "Leave your country, your family, and your father's house for the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)